

# City Works

*Connecting you to what is happening*



March April 2006

[www.BurlingtonNC.gov](http://www.BurlingtonNC.gov)

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE CITY OF BURLINGTON

CityWorks is published bi-monthly

## John Locke Foundation Reports Burlington has One of the Lowest Tax Burdens in the State

A report released by the Center for Local Innovation comparing tax burdens for the largest cities in North Carolina shows that Burlington has one of the lowest tax burdens in the state. The City is ranked 21 out of the 26 largest cities, according to 2003-2004 budget figures.

A low tax burden per capita indicates the City of Burlington is providing a full range of municipal services while maintaining relatively low property tax rates and tax values when compared to other large North Carolina cities.

The City of Burlington provides a full range of services from garbage pick-up to recreation programs to full-time fire departments. Services provided by the City should be considered when comparing tax burdens.

The report states that By the Numbers shows the cost of local government; it does not attempt to measure the quantity or quality of services provided in exchange for those dollars. Nor does the report consider the additional out-of-pocket costs to individuals for services that their local government may not provide. In unincorporated areas, for example, homeowners may have to contract privately for garbage pickup, while those living in a town or city may well receive this service, paid for through their municipal property and other taxes. A municipality may also use some of its tax dollars to provide a higher quality of fire protection, which may translate into lower homeowners insurance rates.

Importantly, this means that whether a jurisdiction is ranked high or low in cost, government is not the end of the debate over fiscal policy - it is merely the beginning. Citizens of North Carolina's cities and counties must decide whether the services they receive are worth the price they and their fellow residential and business taxpayers are paying in local taxes and fees.

To view the entire report go to [www.johnlocke.org/](http://www.johnlocke.org/)

## Burlington Fire Department Initiates Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Program

Since January 2002, up to 27% of all fires investigated by the Burlington Fire Department's Investigation Team have been caused by juvenile firesetters. With this figure and the occurrence of unreported juvenile-involved fires, the Burlington Fire Department has initiated a Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Program (JFIP). The goal of JFIP is to define and change firesetting behavior of youth throughout Burlington and Alamance County. The JFIP creates an identification/referral/educational process for local youth identified as juvenile firesetters.

Nationwide more than 28,000 residential fires occur annually due to child fire play. Sadly, nearly 1,000 of those children die in the fire that they started. Although curiosity is a normal part of a child's growth and development, curiosity about fire should be taken very seriously.

As part of the Juvenile Firesetters Intervention Program, a committee of professionals has been established that includes local Fire, law enforcement, Alamance-Burlington

School System, Alamance County Mental Health, Department of Social Services and Juvenile Justice team members.

The JFIP is available to any Alamance County youth, ages 4-15. Referrals to the JFIP may be made by parents and caregivers of the individual youth or by member organizations of the JFIP Committee. Before the implementation of the JFIP, no educational option existed specific to fire-related cases. This program will give the Juvenile Justice System an alternative resource as part of the punitive process and require court-ordered participation in the educational phase of the JFIP.

Members of the Burlington Fire Department who have been trained as Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialists currently administer the educational phase of the JFIP. Risk surveys are completed with the juvenile involved in the fire and the parent/caregiver of the juvenile.

To receive additional information, please contact program coordinator Captain Matt Lawrence at 229-3577.

# North Carolina Stormwater Survey Finds

## Most Unaware Stormwater Not Treated

What do you really know about stormwater? How about your neighbor? North Carolina's Department of Environment and Natural Resources thinks the answers are very import for two reasons. First, polluted stormwater runoff is the largest source of water pollution in North Carolina and the nation. Second, the number one source of stormwater pollution is people going about their daily business. Most have no idea they are polluting their local water supply.

East Carolina University's Survey center administered a survey in August and September. Staff placed more than 11,000 calls to get 1,000 completed surveys; a large enough number that the findings have a 95 percent confidence level. The results were a mix of the expected and the unexpected:

- Most rate water quality as "good" (42.4 percent) followed by "fair" (39.4 percent) .
- Most residents do not know storm water receives no treatment before storm drains carry it directly to the nearest creek, stream or river. (Only 37.6 percent got this one right.)
- Most residents (54.2 percent) do not test soil to determine its needs before applying fertilizer.
- Some of us (5.8 percent) apply fertilizer monthly (which is way too much) .
- Some 40 percent wash their own vehicles, but more than one-third wash in their driveways.
- Only one-fifth change their own oil, but 12 percent of them throw used oil in the grass.
- Most pet walkers do not "scoop the poop" but women scoop more than men.

Protecting water quality through education is not just desirable; many N.C. communities are mandated to do so by the federal government. The U.S. EPA requires communities with certain sizes, growth rates and locations to receive stormwater permits. In addition to education, the permits require other activities like tracking illicit discharges (straight piping) and controlling runoff from construction sites. This survey's focus was outreach and education.

To see the survey or read an analysis of its finding, please visit [http://www.ncstormwater.org/pdfs/stormwater\\_survey\\_12506.pdf](http://www.ncstormwater.org/pdfs/stormwater_survey_12506.pdf). For more information contact Chrystal Bartlett, DENR stormwater awareness and outreach coordinator, at (919) 715-4116 or [chrystal.bartlett@ncmail.net](mailto:chrystal.bartlett@ncmail.net).

## Stormwater Fact Sheet

### Storm Drains

Stormwater, the runoff from melting snow or rain, picks up dirt, chemicals, oil and pet waste as it runs off' hard surfaces like roads, sidewalks and roofs. Stormwater is carried by gutters to storm drains that lead directly to the nearest creek, stream or lake. Stormwater receives no treatment.

### Water Pollution

The single largest water pollution source in North Carolina and the nation is stormwater. The number one pollutant, by volume, is sediment. Erosion from agriculture, development and eroding streambeds is the primary source.

### Soil Test

Soil tests are available for free from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Fertilizers can deliver different chemicals at different rates, so having a soil test lets one know how much of a given chemical a yard needs.

### Fertilizer

Grass can only take up so much fertilizer, so applying more fertilizer wastes money and poses a water pollution threat. When fertilizer reaches streams, it encourages algae to grow. When algae blooms die off, they use up so much of the water's oxygen that it can cause a fish kill.

### Yard Waste

Grass clipping and leaves, if left in the gutter, can be swept into storm drains that carry the waste to local creeks, streams and rivers. Yard waste acts like a fertilizer in the water and can stimulate algae growth.

### Washing Vehicles

Do-it-yourself car washers should wash above grass or gravel, otherwise all the soap, brake dust, oil and road dirt flow off the driveway into the gutter and down to the closest storm drain.

### Home Oil Changers

Disposing of used waste oil properly is vital because one quart of waste oil can contaminate one million gallons of clean water. Many garages, auto parts stores and even quick-change outfits will take your used oil and send it for recycling. Never throw used oil onto grass because the petroleum products can reach and contaminate groundwater.

### Why Scoop the Poop?

Pet waste is like any other waste - loaded with microbes that can harm human health. Pet waste can also act like a fertilizer and stimulate algae growth. When we leave pet waste on sidewalks and streets, rain picks it up and carries it to the nearest storm drain where it contaminates the water.